

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 18700 301426Z  
ACTION SS-25

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O 301320Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7030

S E C R E T BANGKOK 18700

EXDIS

EO 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PDIP OTRA PBOR VM TH CB  
SUBJECT: THAI RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

1. DURING JUNE 30 MEETING WITH MFA UNDERSECRETARY ARUN, CHARGE QUERIED HIM ON INDO-CHINA SITUATION.
2. ARUN FIRST INDICATED THAT RTG HAS JUST RECEIVED COMMUNICATION THAT IENG SARY WOULD VISIT THAILAND JULY 14-17. ARUN ASKED THAT THIS INFORMATION BE HELD ONLY TO USG OFFICIALS AND NOT DISCUSSED WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS. ARUN ALSO SAID THAT VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR HAS NOW INFORMALLY APPROACHED MFA ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF VISIT TO THAILAND BY VIETNAMESE PRIME MINISTER PHAM VAN DONG. VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THIS COULD BE PRECEDED BY VIETNAMESE CULTURAL GROUP.
3. WITH REGARD TO IENG SARY VISIT, ARUN SAID GOVERNMENT IS NOW FOCUSING VERY CAREFULLY ON PREPARATIONS . OBVIOUS ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA INCLUDE EASING OF BORDER SITUATION, NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF ECONOMIC TIES. ARUN, HOWEVER, SAID RTG WANTS TO CAREFULLY WATCH IENG SARY IN ACTION TO ASSESS WHAT HIS CONTINUING ROLE IS AND WHETHER HE NOW DOMINATES CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP.
4. WITH REGARD TO VIETNAMESE INTEREST IN INVITATION TO VISIT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 18700 301426Z

BANGKOK, ARUN SAID RTG "CANNOT SAY NO" BUT WILL PROCEED VERY CAUTIOUSLY. HE NOTED THAT INDO-CHINA SITUATION IS EXTREMELY FLUID AND THAI MUST ASSESS VERY CAREFULLY THE WEIGHT TO BE GIVEN RELATIONS WITH EACH OF THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS, AS WELL AS THE PRC. ARUN SAID THAT THE TIMING OF A VISIT BY VIETNAMESE PRIME MINISTER DONG WILL BE "VERY TRICKY" GIVEN THE UPCOMING MEETING WITH IENG SARY AND THE FACT THAT TENG HSIAO PING INTENDS TO VISIT

THAILAND BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR.

5. CHARGE ASKED ARUN WHAT HIS IMPRESSION WAS OF CAMBODIAN INTERNAL SITUATION AND CURRENT LEADERSHIP. ARUN SAID THAT RTG HAS GOTTEN RUMORS FROM "REFUGEES" OF INTERNAL STRAINS WITHIN THE CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP BUT HAS NO HARD INFORMATION ON CURRENT STATUS OF POL POT. HE SAID THAT IN PAST MONTHS THAI HAVE SEEN EVIDENCE OF EMERGENCY OF IENG SARY AS THE MAJOR POWER IN PHNOM PENH, NOT POL POT AS THAI HAD ORIGINALLY THOUGH. HOWEVER, MFA HAS NO FIRM EVIDENCE AS TO POL POT'S CURRENT STATUS. HE SAID THAT RTG HAS RECENTLY RECEIVED LETTER SIGNED BY POL POT BUT IT HAD BENN DATED ALMOST A MONTH AGO.

6. ARUN ALSO SAID THAT VIETNAMESE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN WOULD BE TRANSITING BANGKOK ON JULY 3 AND MFA WAS HOSTING A DINNER FOR HIM. HE SAID THAT THE MINISTRY IS HOPEFUL THAT IN COURSE OF DISCUSSIONS HERE HIEN WILL GIVE THE THAI THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR DIRECTLY THE VIETNAMESE VERSION OF EVENTS BOTH WITH REGARD TO PRC AND CAMBODIA.

7. MORE GENERALLY, ARUN COMMENTED THAT THE RTG RECOGNIZES THAT PRESENT SITUATION POSES SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THE RTG IN DEALINGS WITH ITS INDO-CHINA COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS, PRC AND USSR. HE SAID THE RTG IS KEENLY AWARE OF THE CAREFUL PATH IT MUST TREAD IN DEALINGS WITH EACH OF THESE CONTENDING GOVERNMENTS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 18700 301426Z

8. COMMENT: WHILE WE DO NOT EXPECT RTG TO KEEP TIMING OF IENG SARY VISIT SECRET VERY LONG, DO BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT WE HONOR ARUN'S REQUEST RE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THIS INFORMATION. SINCE THE THAI ARE APPARENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING THE SUBJECT OF DIPLOMATIC BLANDISHMENTS BY THEIR COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS, WE DO NOT WISH TO ENDANGER THE GENERALLY FRANK DIALOGUE WHICH ARUN AND SOME OTHER SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS HAVE ENGAGED IN WITH US.

9. AS VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR APPROACHED MFA ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER RETURNING TO BANGKOK FROM CONSULTATIONS IN HANOI WITH VIETNAMESE AMBASSADORS TO OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, THE PROPOSED VISIT OF PHAM VAN DONG IS PROBABLY PART OF A LARGER VIETNAMESE DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH ITS REGIONAL PROBLEMS. O'DONOHUE

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